



Enforcement News

Settlement reached with sewer district that had hundreds of raw sewage spills

Sacramento Area Sewer District will pay \$630,283 penalty

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SACRAMENTO – The Sacramento Area Sewer District (SASD) has agreed to a \$630,283 [settlement](#) related to more than 250 spills involving nearly 1 million gallons of raw sewage over the past five years, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) announced this week.

The largest spill, during a holiday weekend in early 2021, accounted for nearly half of the overall total discharge, when 480,000 gallons of raw sewage overwhelmed a roadside ditch, of which 379,000 gallons reached a tributary of the Mokelumne River. The cause of that spill was traced to a temporary repair of a force main – a pressurized wastewater pipeline – that was not inspected for two days.

The other spills took place between October 2016 and September 2021. In those instances, more than 435,000 gallons of raw sewage was discharged to surface water outside the American River watershed and another 144,000 gallons to surface water within the American River watershed. SASD has attributed the spills to operational and structural failures, including root intrusion, grease deposition, vandalism, and the presence of debris.

“These sewage spills have the potential to harm aquatic life and impact human health,” said John J. Baum, assistant executive officer for the Central Valley Water Board.

“Spills to the American River are of particular concern since the lower reaches of the American River are impacted by bacterial contamination. This significant settlement reflects the serious nature of the spills.”

Any entity that operates a sewage collection system over one mile in length is required to enroll in the Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems. Among other items, this permit requires that sewer systems be properly operated and maintained to prevent discharges of raw sewage to surface waters. Raw sewage contains highly elevated concentrations of coliform organisms, biochemical

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oxygen demand, and ammonia, which can lead to low dissolved oxygen in surface water that can impact aquatic life and human health.

[The Central Valley Water Board](#) is a state agency responsible for protecting water quality and ensuring beneficial uses such as aquatic habitat and human health for 11,350 miles of streams, 579,110 acres of lakes, and the largest contiguous groundwater basin in California. It is the largest of nine regional boards, encompassing 60,000 square miles, or about 40 percent of the state. Thirty-eight of 58 counties are either completely or partially within the Board's boundaries, formed by the crests of the Sierra Nevada on the east, the Coast Ranges and Klamath Mountains on the west, the Oregon border on the north, and the Tehachapi Mountains on the south.